

GREEN

Everything was green when I was a kid
our house was green, the orange and lemon trees,
the back and front yards were green,
my mother's car was green, the gingham
ruffles she tacked on the kitchen cabinets
were green, the spinach, lettuce and
green beans we ate were green, even the
hassock in front of the corner windows
in my bedroom where I sat waiting
for my boyfriends to come in their
lowered Mercs and Chevies was green.
I hated green, vowed that when I married
everything would be aquamarine
and for years just about everything was,
the tv and drapes, the naugahyde couch,
even my unbreakable Melmac plates and
saucers had tiny aquamarine flowers
on them even though there were no
aquamarine flowers anyplace else in the world.
Now everything in my house is green
the ivy on my mother's old Franciscan
dinnerware is green, the apples and
avocados in the fruit bowl are green,
the napkins and placemats, the lamps,
throw pillows and Christmas lights,
the shower curtain, towels and walls
are the color of the rain forests,
the ceiling painted a pearl white
to resemble thick, cumulus rain clouds.

I guess I lied about hating green.

STRAWBERRY JAM

Every June my mother would ruin my summer
by making me help her make strawberry jam
making me sit with her out back on a blanket
beneath the orange tree, our two dogs and
one cat watching us pluck one by one the
stems from hundreds, thousands, a million
strawberries while I listened to the kids
out front, Circean voices laughing, having
fun riding bikes, throwing baseballs, and
just for spite I wouldn't eat even one of
those strawberries and then the next day
it got even worse when she made me help
her can the strawberries, help her boil
lids and jars, listen to her stories of
germs I didn't believe in and couldn't see
that could spoil the jam and make you sick

her stirring the strawberries, sugar and pectin, pouring the hot, bubbly stuff into the awful-hot jars, her sweating, telling me to pay attention, watch now, so you can make your own jam when you're grown, and I'd say, oh no, when I'm grown I'll buy my jam at the store. I wanted my summer freedom when grown from all that busy-ness with pots and jars, a June of days of my own choosing, never thinking for one minute that a time would come when I'd want more than anything just one of those jars of strawberry jam she stacked on the window sill, just one of those hot, steamy ruby-sweet sparkling jewels cooling off in the white June sun.

IN THE SHADOW OF RASPBERRY PIES

Rock 'n' roll drove my father crazy made him curse modern society and grind his teeth. My mother either in spite of him or to spite him loved it, bought the latest hit every week to play on the 45 record player in the den where she'd teach me the jitterbug to "Tutti Frutti" and "Roll With Me Henry" and I'd teach her the Bop to "Ain't That a Shame" and "Don't Be Cruel," me imagining to be the winner of a rock 'n' roll tv dance contest, James Dean my dance partner.

Then at five when my father arrived home from work he played his Classics, his "Desert Song," Strauss waltzes, and Mario Lanza, boxed 45s the color of raspberry pies, and he'd sing his Texas baritone along with Lanza's "La Donna Mobile" while my mother and I fixed supper, me imagining to be a princess waltzing "The Blue Danube" with a prince, and my mother saying, even though my father was only 2 years older than she, "That old fogey."